

Using LinkedIn to Tell Your Organization's Story

Did you know that nearly 5,000 YALI Network members use the [YALI Network LinkedIn Group](#) to connect with one another and to grow their professional networks?

LinkedIn is a business-oriented social network that helps its users make professional connections, find jobs, discover leads and more. Users create their own professional profiles — similar to a digital resume — and establish connections with colleagues, potential partners and businesses.

If you are looking to share stories with an educated, affluent and professional audience, consider using LinkedIn. Its ability to engage a highly targeted, donor-rich demographic makes it a powerful distribution channel for social impact organizations.


The best way to share stories on LinkedIn is through status updates on your organization's Company Page. When sharing content on LinkedIn, be sure to post links and use images. Posts with links to other content have twice the engagement rate of posts without, and posts with images have a 98 percent higher comment rate.

Organizations should engage with their LinkedIn followers on a regular basis by encouraging them to participate in the conversations spurred by the stories you share in your status updates. You can further this participation by asking follow-up questions and writing status updates with clear calls to action.

To increase your organization's visibility on LinkedIn, you should create original content, encourage others to share your content, and give people a clear reason to engage with your content.

This article is adapted from Hatch for Good's [Guide to LinkedIn](#). Hatch for Good is a platform that provides people and organizations with the tools they need to create powerful stories and inspire positive action in the digital age. Visit [Hatch for Good's website](#) to view additional resources.

Journalist Brings Positive Change to Nigerian Communities

Oluwatoyosi (Toyosi) Ogunseye 

For years, the steel plant in Lagos, Nigeria, emitted noxious fumes, annoying local residents. So journalist Oluwatoyosi (Toyosi) Ogunseye decided to investigate.

Ogunseye convinced her employer, Punch Nigeria Limited, to pay to test the health of a group of residents. The results of the residents' blood, urine and drinking water tests revealed poisonous

metals in their bodies that were developing into cancers, asthma and other ailments.

Punch Nigeria publishes Punch, Nigeria's most widely read newspaper, and Ogunseye's investigation became a three-part series linking the plant's fumes to the residents' ailments.

Soon after Ogunseye's series appeared in Punch, the government ordered the plant closed and allowed it to reopen only under strict new regulations. The plant's owner agreed to compensate residents.

This wasn't the first time one of Ogunseye's investigations sparked positive change. When another story revealed a children's ward in a government-owned hospital was under-equipped, the government bought more incubators for high-risk infants and increased its support of other facilities that serve children. "I like to reveal the story behind the story," she said.

Her experience shows that accurate and fair journalism can make a difference in peoples' lives.

"I went into journalism because of my passion to make positive changes in the society," said the 2014 Mandela Washington Fellow and YALI Network member.

Building a Career in Journalism

In her second year as a university biochemistry student, then-20-year-old Ogunseye landed her first reporting job with the Sun newspapers. One of her first investigative stories was about four students who suddenly died after attending a disco.

Since her first days with Sun, Ogunseye has earned a bachelor's and a master's degree in biochemistry from the University of Lagos, a bachelor's in media and communications from Pan-Atlantic University, and a Ph.D. in politics and international relations from the University of Leicester.

Now Punch's first female editor and its youngest, the 31-year-old has 11 years of experience as an investigative journalist writing about topics such as politics, crime, business, health and the environment. Ogunseye, who lives in Lagos, also teaches media ethics at the Nigerian Institute of Journalism.

An inspiration to the next generation of journalists, Ogunseye advises reporters to observe what their peers are doing well and not so well. "Ensure that your content is better than the competitor's while ensuring that their weakness is your strength."

She advises people who read newspapers, listen to radio or learn about current events online to "consume media responsibly. ... It will give you a balanced perspective of issues."

Ogunseye has received numerous professional awards, including the Knight International Journalism Award for outstanding news coverage that makes a difference in the lives of people around the world and the CNN MultiChoice African Journalist of the Year Award.

She hopes one day to be president of Nigeria. "I believe I understand the challenges of my country," she says.

Media Literacy: Five Core Concepts

They are on your mobile phones and computer screens, in newspapers and magazines, stretched across billboards and broadcast through radio waves. They are mediated messages, and you are inundated with them every day.

With so many viewpoints, it's hard to separate [fact from fiction](#). To guide your exploration of the media that surround you, the [Center for Media Literacy](#) developed these five core concepts:

1. All media messages are constructed.

Media texts are built just as surely as buildings and highways are built. The key behind this concept is figuring out who constructed the message, out of what materials and to what effect.

2. Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.

Each form of communication has its own creative language: scary music heightens fear, camera close-ups convey intimacy, big headlines signal significance. Understanding the grammar, syntax and metaphor of media language helps us to be less susceptible to manipulation.

3. Different people experience the same media message differently.

Audiences play a role in interpreting media messages because each audience member brings to the message a unique set of life experiences. Differences in age, gender, education and cultural upbringing will generate unique interpretations.

4. Media have embedded values and points of view.

Because they are constructed, media messages carry a subtext of who and what is important — at least to the person or people creating the message. The choice of a character's age, gender or race, the selection of a setting, and the actions within the plot are just some of the ways that values become "embedded" in a television show, a movie or an advertisement.

5. Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.

Much of the world's media were developed as money-making enterprises. Newspapers and magazines lay out their pages with ads first; the space remaining is devoted to news. Likewise, commercials are part and parcel of most television watching. Now, the Internet has become an international platform through which groups or individuals can attempt to persuade.

By considering the core concepts behind every media message, you equip yourself with an ability to analyze and interpret a message — and to accept or reject its legitimacy.

To learn more about these core concepts, download the Center for Media Literacy's [free toolkit](#). The Center for Media Literacy is an organization that helps people make sense of today's complex media environment.

Media Literacy: Five Key Questions


What separates a newspaper from a tabloid or a legitimate website from a hoax? Knowing how to distinguish [fact from fiction](#). To encourage people to think more critically about the media they are consuming, the [Center for Media Literacy](#) developed these five questions one should consider:

1. Who created this message?
2. What techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. How might people understand this message differently?
4. What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
5. Why was this message sent?

By asking these questions regularly about the messages you see, read and hear, you can become more media literate, better formulate your own opinions and better express these opinions in public debates or discussions.

The Center for Media Literacy is an organization that teaches people how to make sense of our complex media environment. You can learn more about media literacy by downloading the organization's [free toolkit on media literacy education](#).

Can You Separate Fact from Fiction?

As our media consumption increases, so does our need for media literacy. (Adam  Jones/Flickr)

In 2014, South Africans spent 8.2 hours a day consuming media on the Internet. They weren't in the

lead. According to [market-research](#) firm GlobalWebIndex, Filipinos won that distinction, by spending 9.6 hours a day accessing the Internet from their desktops, laptops and mobile devices.

That is a lot of time. And it underscores the need for people everywhere to be media literate.

What is media literacy?

Whether online, on television or in newspapers, people are bombarded with messages. Media literacy is about understanding how and why messages are being communicated. It starts with asking the right questions: Who created this message? What words or images are used in this message and why? How is this message supposed to make me feel?

Why is media literacy important?

Media literacy teaches you to think critically about the information you consume. These skills — asking relevant questions, exploring multiple viewpoints, making novel connections — aren't just important in the living room, or wherever else you might watch television or check a smartphone. Critical thinking helps you do well in many pursuits, whether in the classroom or the boardroom.

The [Center for Media Literacy](#) has identified five more reasons to understand today's media-soaked environment:

1. You need two skills to be engaged citizens of a democracy: critical thinking and self-expression. Media literacy instills both.
2. You are exposed to more media messages in one day than previous generations were exposed to in a year. Media literacy teaches you the skills to navigate safely through these messages.
3. Media exerts a significant impact on the way we understand, interpret and act. Media literacy helps you understand outside influences and empowers you to make better decisions.
4. The world is increasingly influenced by visual images. Learning how to “read” through layers of image-based communication is just as necessary as learning to analyze text-based communication.
5. Media literacy helps you understand where information comes from, whose interests may be being served and how to find alternative views.

How can I become media literate?

Examine what you read, watch and hear. By doing this often, you'll become more aware of its purpose and better able to separate fact from fiction. For in-depth resources about media literacy, visit the [Center for Media Literacy's online reading room](#) and the [National Association for Media Literacy Education's resource hub](#).

Veteran Journalist Discusses Free Media in Latest #YALICHAT

“Journalists should be friends to facts and issues as opposed to personalities or politicians. What’s important is accountability.”

This is how Ugandan-born American journalist Shaka Ssali described the responsibility of journalists during a May 12 #YALICHat. The host of the popular program [Straight Talk Africa](#) responded to questions from YALI Network members as follow-up to his guest [blog post](#).

The veteran journalist said he was drawn to journalism “because I wanted to advocate for social justice and give a voice to the voiceless.” Journalism also gives him “the opportunity to put people in authority in a position where they are held accountable,” he said.

Here are some other highlights from Ssali’s #YALICHat:

I’m profoundly honored & exceedingly humbled to have the opportunity to interact with [@YALInetwork](#). #YALICHAT [pic.twitter.com/iWZ4TJcXj4](#)

— Straight Talk Africa (@VOAShaka) [May 12, 2015](#)

.[@ndzomoaurelien](#) [@YALINetwork](#) You have to do your homework, report news with neither fear, nor favor #YALICHAT

— Straight Talk Africa (@VOAShaka) [May 12, 2015](#)

.[@ladumdum](#) When Africa can overcome socio-political obstacles & practice journalism that reflects the realities of the Mother continent.

— Straight Talk Africa (@VOAShaka) [May 12, 2015](#)

.[@Sir_Ruffy](#) To be a good journalist you have to have the passion to be a servant to the truth, because it is a calling not an occupation.

— Straight Talk Africa (@VOAShaka) [May 12, 2015](#)

.[@dshekuza](#) [@YALINetwork](#) Citizen journalism plays an important role in [#Africa](#), even better in tandem with traditional journalism #YALICHAT

— Straight Talk Africa (@VOAShaka) [May 12, 2015](#)

.[@GenuineRamabote](#) [@VOANews](#) If the mistake belongs to the media institution, it should be acknowledged & corrected immediately #YALICHAT

— Straight Talk Africa (@VOAShaka) [May 12, 2015](#)

[.@tunde_aribisala](#) Where there is no free media internet journalism can be a catalyst. In other cases can play a complementary role [#YALICHAT](#)

— Straight Talk Africa (@VOAShaka) [May 12, 2015](#)

[.@kennedytetteh](#) The role of media in [#Africa](#) is to inform, educate, provoke, to expose social injustices & hold people in power accountable.

— Straight Talk Africa (@VOAShaka) [May 12, 2015](#)

[.@GenuineRamabote](#) [@YALINetwork](#) I do my job with neither favor, nor fear. [#YALICHAT](#)

— Straight Talk Africa (@VOAShaka) [May 12, 2015](#)

Time is not our best ally. Get better Africa and not bitter. Let's keep the African hope alive. [#YALICHAT](#) [pic.twitter.com/XsClN2ulEq](#)

— Straight Talk Africa (@VOAShaka) [May 12, 2015](#)

On that note, thank you all for following and asking your questions.

— Straight Talk Africa (@VOAShaka) [May 12, 2015](#)

[Being Accountable to the Public](#)

Part of a journalist's job is to hold people in positions of authority accountable to the public. News organizations have a similar ethical obligation.

This section — part of an ongoing series on media law — explores the ethical obligations of journalists and news organizations alike. Simply click on the titles below, in blue, to expand a section and learn more.

[Full Disclosure](#)

News media are more transparent than many businesses because their work is under constant scrutiny. In many countries, consumers have many options for news and can reject those whose

standards fall short.

If business or political groups influence a news organization's editorial choices, that should be disclosed. Media should explain how they make editorial decisions, especially controversial ones. Deviations from usual standards should be explained. News organizations should invite readers to comment and encourage them to raise concerns and complaints. An impartial staff member should address complaints.

All news organizations make mistakes. They should strive to minimize mistakes by establishing fact-checking procedures. When errors occur, they should be acknowledged promptly and corrected.

Citizen Journalism

Most media ethical guidelines make sense for citizen journalists and bloggers who face particular challenges.

Unlike mainstream journalists, bloggers often publish anonymously or use a pseudonym. In some societies, those holding controversial views withhold their identity for safety. But those who speak anonymously still have an ethical obligation to be truthful, accurate and as transparent as possible.

Many bloggers encourage readers to engage in discussions. They invite user-generated content and post it on their blogs. They may link to external sites and excerpt others' work for the purpose of commentary.

These techniques add vitality to a blog. But bloggers should consider if they will verify links, moderate postings by others or establish policies for certain types of content. It is wise to post these policies prominently and to apply them consistently.

Many journalists are turning to social media platforms that allow individuals to post content. These platforms can provide story ideas, allow journalists to interact with a community, or encourage readers to visit a news organization's website.

Social Media Challenges

But social media pose new challenges. Verifying postings can be difficult. Reporters should make it clear when they use social media as a source. They should be cautious when they use information that concerns minors, could damage someone's reputation, or that someone claims to own, such as a trade secret. The laws of libel, privacy and copyright apply in cyberspace.

Some news organizations have policies regarding employees' use of social media, such as discouraging personal viewpoints on their Facebook pages or discussing a developing story that has not yet been published. Some organizations require reporters to have separate professional and personal Facebook pages.

A Legal Right to Be Wrong?

Many journalists believe they should not have to justify their role as government watchdogs and as

conduits of public information. They think that they must have the legal right to be wrong sometimes.

But journalists' ethical standards can be more stringent than legal ones. They encourage journalists to examine their motivations, methods and product. They encourage reporters and editors to ask tough questions about how they make decisions and to consider other perspectives.

Adopting and applying ethics principles provides a mandate to act independently when seeking and pursuing truth.

They can help journalists do the best job possible.

Other parts in this series include [The Independent Journalist](#) and [Objectivity in the News](#).

(Adapted from an [article](#) published in the *Media Law Handbook* by the Bureau of International Information Programs. Download the complete [Media Law Handbook](#) [PDF, 2.6MB].)

The Independent Journalist

The journalist's greatest loyalty is to the public. This means avoiding conflicts of interest that could compromise his or her ability to act independently.

This section — part of an ongoing series on media law — examines how journalists can remain free of undue influence. Simply click on the titles below, in blue, to expand a section and learn more.

Dos and Don'ts

Journalists should not accept gifts, fees, tickets or other goods or services from news sources. Review copies of books, music or movies should be donated to charity unless there is a reason to keep them for future reporting. Be wary of travel offers that are disguised attempts to persuade a reporter to write enthusiastically about something. News organizations should pay to send staff to cover events. If this is not possible, a disclaimer should be included in the story.

Journalists should not endorse products in return for compensation. The editorial and advertising sides of the news business should be kept separate. Advertisements should be clearly labeled so there is no possibility of confusing an ad with a news report or commentary.

A journalist's membership in clubs, associations, political parties or religious groups can create a conflict of interest. Some news organizations prohibit certain kinds of political or philanthropic activities. Most forbid journalists to report on organizations with which they or close family members are affiliated. Affiliations can be interpreted as bias. If a conflict of interest is unavoidable,

it should be disclosed.

Many news organizations have special rules for reporters who cover business and finance. Journalists should not write about companies in which they own stock, particularly if their reporting might influence the stock market and benefit them personally. They should tell editors what financial instruments they and their families own.

Just as journalists should not accept payments intended to influence news coverage, they should not offer payments to news subjects. To the observer, news that has been “bought and paid for” is suspect. In certain situations, such as when a source is asked to travel to a particular location to appear on a radio or television program, it may be appropriate to reimburse reasonable expenses for meals, travel and lodging.

Covering Government

Reporting on government raises particularly difficult challenges. The public expects journalists to act as watchdogs, guarding against improper government behavior. But the pressure to be patriotic can be great. Sometimes journalists are asked to report propaganda as truth in the interest of protecting “national security.”

When editorial decisions conflict with government wishes, news organizations can be criticized for substituting their own judgment for that of elected officials. This can arise when the government claims that there is a compelling need for secrecy about intelligence and law enforcement matters.

These are difficult calls. A guiding principle is that a journalist’s loyalty is to the public, not to a particular government or regime. No journalist wants to harm his community or country. But governments may be tempted to suppress critical reporting by claiming it could damage public safety or national security.

Reporters can respect these claims, but also be skeptical. They can give government officials an opportunity to explain why a particular story might endanger lives or a specific national interest. But journalists should scrutinize those in power and hold them accountable.

Sometimes, the most patriotic thing a journalist can do is question authority.

Other parts in this series include [Being Accountable to the Public](#) and [Objectivity in the News](#).

(Adapted from an [article](#) published in the *Media Law Handbook* by the Bureau of International Information Programs. Download the complete [Media Law Handbook](#) [PDF, 2.6MB].)

Objectivity in the News

No one approaches any story with complete objectivity. As a reporter begins to research, it is likely that she will have a bias toward some aspects of the story. The goal is to set aside those presumptions and move forward with healthy skepticism.

To learn how journalists can achieve objectivity in their reporting, simply click on the titles below to expand a section and learn more.

Encouraging Diversity of Views

In many countries, a partisan press is the norm. Readers and viewers in these nations expect that a news organization will approach topics from its point of view and select subjects it covers accordingly. They know that competing news organizations may advocate from different perspectives. Opinion columns should be clearly labeled and should neither distort nor falsify.

Journalists should seek diverse voices and competing views. They should support freedom of speech. News organizations should provide forums for robust debate on issues vital to their communities. Letters to the editor and readers' comments encourage public participation. News organizations also should make every effort to keep discussions civil and discourage falsehoods or attacks on others.

Respect for the Individual

The Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics says, "Minimize harm ... treat sources, subjects and colleagues as human beings deserving of respect." This principle recognizes that a responsible journalist may sometimes harm someone but should make every effort to minimize that damage. The code advises the journalist to show compassion for those who will be affected by news coverage, especially when they get attention through no fault of their own.

Crime victims, relatives of public figures, children and other vulnerable people should be treated with sensitivity.

Intrusive newsgathering can cause harm. Persistence is appropriate, but aggressive tactics cannot always be justified. Although possibly legal, making repeated phone calls, following a person, taking photographs or remaining on private property after being asked to leave may cause distress.

There can be valid reasons to report information that a news subject would prefer to keep secret. A public official may wish to keep secret an extramarital affair. But if public resources are used to support the affair, it becomes a matter of legitimate public interest.

Similarly, crime victims often prefer that their identity remain confidential, particularly in the case of sexual assault. The news media should balance the rights and interests of both victims and criminal defendants with the right of the public to be informed.

Cultural Sensitivity

Journalists should not reinforce stereotypes. They should consider carefully whether it is necessary to identify an individual by race, religion, sexual orientation or similar characteristic. Gender-neutral language often is appropriate.

Reporters should remember to be sensitive to different cultural traditions. For example, adherents of some religions forbid or discourage photographing individuals. On the other hand, “cultural values” can be a cloak for censorship.

The ethical journalist should challenge attempts to suppress the truth, whatever justification is offered.

Other parts in this series include [The Independent Journalist](#) and [Being Accountable to the Public](#).

(Adapted from an [article](#) published in the *Media Law Handbook* by the Bureau of International Information Programs. Download the complete [Media Law Handbook](#) [PDF 2.6 MB].)

Taking Better Photographs: The Rules of Composition

(Photo Credit: Lawrence Jackson, [White House](#))



There's more to taking good photographs than having the latest technology. There's composition. Generally speaking, photographic composition is the pleasing selection and arrangement of subjects within a picture. One way to arrange a photo is to place people or objects in certain positions. Another is to choose a specific point of view.

To help budding photographers sharpen their sense of composition — and take better photographs — Kodak developed [these rules of photographic composition](#). You can find an adapted version below, along with sample photographs from the official White House photographer.

Simplicity

(Photo Credit: Pete Souza, [White House](#))



The first rule is simplicity. Compose your photograph so that the reason you're taking the picture is clear. Look for ways to give the focus of your picture the most visual attention. Arrange other parts of your picture so that they complement this focus instead of detracting from it.

One way to do this is to select uncomplicated backgrounds that will not steal attention from your subjects. In the picture above, the background is so simple that the eye is immediately drawn to the boy's smiling face. We don't see that he's giving a “fist bump” to President Obama — nor do we need to.

Rule of Thirds

(Photo Credit: Pete Souza, [White House](#))



The rule of thirds is a guide that helps photographers place objects and people within their pictures. Here's how it works: Imagine your picture divided into thirds both horizontally and vertically. The intersections of these imaginary lines create four options for placing the focus of your picture.

If you want to make your photograph more dynamic, place your focus slightly off-center like the picture above. Generally, pictures with subjects directly in the center tend to be more static and less interesting than pictures with off-center subject placement.

Lines

(Photo Credit: Pete Souza, [White House](#))



Lines play an important role in composition. You can provide the viewer a way into your picture by using diagonals as leading lines. In the example above, the diagonal line created by the sidewalk helps carry the eye from President and Michelle Obama to the Chicago skyline.

(Photo Credit: Pete Souza, [White House](#))



You can also use repetitive lines to draw viewers' attention to the subject of your photograph. In the picture above, the repetition of the shelves and picture frames actually directs the eye toward President Obama and Brigadier General Erik Kurilla.

(Photo Credit: Pete Souza, [White House](#))



Another common line used in composition is called the "S curve." "Occasionally, a graphic element becomes the key factor in an interesting photograph," explains official White House photographer Pete Souza. "Here, at Los Angeles International Airport, I ran out in front of Air Force One to preposition myself at a low angle to take advantage of the yellow stripe as the President walked off the plane." The stripe brings the eye into the photograph and balances the visual weight of the plane.

Balance

(Photo Credit: Pete Souza, [White House](#))



Achieving balance is another rule for better composition. Good balance is simply the arrangement of shapes, colors and light so that these elements complement one another. In the picture above, for example, the shape and darkness of the crowd is balanced by the complementary shape and lightness of the brick wall.

Framing

(Photo Credit: Pete Souza, [White House](#))



Another way to improve your photographic composition is through framing. This means to use people or objects within your picture to frame the focus of your picture. In the picture above, for example, President Obama's silhouette is framed by the tunnel's structure as well as the onlookers.

Avoiding Mergers

(Photo Credit: Pete Souza, [White House](#))



Can you see how the flag's stripes almost look like they're coming out of President Obama's head? This is a merger, and it's something photographers should avoid. Mergers happen because we see things in three dimensions, while the camera does not.

Near mergers, like the one pictured above, are objects or lines that are too close to the principal subject. While they may not be as objectionable as a tree that looks like it's sprouting from a subject's head, they can steal attention from the focus of your picture.

Border mergers happen when you cut people in half or trim their heads or feet. To avoid border mergers, adjust your picture to leave a little space around everyone.
